



Why True Reform of American Public Education is Impossible

It is that basic shift in educational philosophy, which most people are unaware of, that makes reform of the system impossible. But it's useful at this point to know how all of this came about so that one is not taken in by the educators' false promises of reform that will require billions in expenditures and not produce the academic improvements we are being led to believe will take place.



The system, from the graduate school of education to the public kindergarten, has been so totally changed and corrupted by the behavioral psychologists that it is beyond repair. It cannot be restored to what it was before the psychologists took it over, and the present leaders are not about to change their philosophy of education to reflect the traditional values the progressives rejected a hundred years ago.

What is needed is a complete abandonment by parents of the present system, and the creation of an entirely new system based on private ownership and parental rights. The American people as a whole may not yet be ready for a revolution in education, but there are thousands of families that have already staged their own micro-revolutions and abandoned the government system.

One of the important lessons we learn from history is that if you do not want to repeat the mistakes and failures of the past, you must know history. The history of American education can be roughly divided into three distinct periods, each representing a different and pervasive world-view. The first period — from colonial times to the 1840s — saw the dominance of the Calvinist world-view. God's omnipotent sovereignty was the central reality of man's existence, and man's fallen, sinful nature was acknowledged as the cause of evil and unhappiness.

During this period, Biblical literacy was considered the indispensable spiritual and moral function of education. By knowing God's law and living in obedience to Biblical precepts, man could control his innate depravity and create an orderly, productive society. It was this inner moral self-control that made a free society possible. This period was also characterized by a very high standard of literacy because of the great emphasis that was placed on the learning of language — English, Latin, Greek and Hebrew.

The second period, lasting from the 1840s to around the turn of the last century, reflected the Hegelian mindset. Unitarianism in New England had undermined the orthodox Calvinist belief system, thus making American academics ready to accept Hegel's statist-idealist philosophy, which spread



Written by [Sam Blumenfeld](#) on June 12, 2011

throughout the Western world like a malignant spiritual disease. In this pantheistic scheme, the purpose of life was to glorify man and the instrument through which his collective power could be exercised — the State. It was the perfect philosophy for the new public school movement.

Hegel, the German philosopher, offered a pantheistic view of the universe in which everything consisted of a somewhat formless “God” in the process of perfecting himself through a dynamic, endless process called the dialectic, in which a “thesis” struggled with an “antithesis” to create a “synthesis,” or a new “thesis.” In this manner, moral progress was supposed to lead to some sort of utopia.

Yet, even the Hegelian period was one of high literacy, for Hegel had stressed intellectual development, since he considered man’s mind to be the highest manifestation of God in the universe. Thus, Latin and Greek were studied because they were the languages of the pagan classics. Indeed, William Torrey Harris (1835-1909), who became U.S. Commissioner of Education in 1889, was a fervent Hegelian, and favored well-disciplined classical education.

But a third period in American education began in about 1890 and is still prevalent today: the Progressive period. It arose mainly as a result of the new experimental psychology being taught by Professor Wilhelm Wundt at the University of Leipzig in Germany. The major American academics who studied under Wundt—James McKeen Cattell, G. Stanley Hall, Charles H. Judd and James Earl Russell—came back to the United States eager to revolutionize American education.

In the Progressive scheme, the purpose of man’s life was, and still is, to deny and reject the supernatural, even Hegel’s idealist version of it, and to sacrifice oneself to the collective. Science, evolution, and psychology replaced religion as the focus of faith, and evil was seen as the result of a rapacious capitalist system based on individualism. Egalitarian socialism was seen as the solution to man’s economic and moral problems, and education was seen as the means to bring about the new humanist utopia.

Ayn Rand defined socialism as “the doctrine that man has no right to exist for his own sake, that his life and his work do not belong to him, but belong to society, that the only justification of his existence is his service to society, and that society may dispose of him in any way it pleases for the sake of whatever it deems to be its own tribal, collective good.”

In 1878 G. Stanley Hall returned to America from his Wundtian experience and in 1882 created America’s first psychology laboratory at Johns Hopkins University. He had become a Marxian socialist. Two of Hall’s students were James McKeen Cattell and John Dewey. Cattell spent two years studying under Wundt and created the world’s first psychology department at the University of Pennsylvania in 1887. In 1891 he established Columbia University’s department of psychology. He was one of the founders of the American Psychological Association and the *Psychological Review*. He also founded The Psychological Corporation, which pioneered in the development of psychological testing. He was also a strong believer in Eugenics.

Cattell’s most celebrated pupil was Edward L. Thorndike, who had gotten his master’s degree under William James at Harvard, where he had conducted experiments in animal learning. Under Cattell, Thorndike continued his experiments which were to have a devastating impact on American educational practice.

Thorndike reduced psychology to the study of observable, measurable human behavior—with the complexity and mystery of mind and soul left out. In summing up his “Stimulus-Response” theory of learning, he wrote: “The best way with children may often be, in the pompous words of an animal



Written by [Sam Blumenfeld](#) on June 12, 2011

trainer, to arrange everything in connection with the trick so that the animal will be compelled by the laws of his own nature to perform it.”

In 1904, Cattell invited John Dewey to join the faculty at Columbia. From Johns Hopkins, Dewey had gone to the University of Michigan where he taught philosophy, then to the University of Chicago in 1894 where he created his famous Laboratory School. The purpose of the school was to find out what kind of curriculum was needed to produce socialists instead of capitalists, little collectivists instead of individualists.

Dewey and his colleagues were convinced that socialism was the wave of the future. But the individualist system would not fade away on its own as long as it was being sustained by the kind of education the children were getting in their schools. What was needed was a well-thought-out, long-range, radical plan of curriculum reform. Dewey wrote: “Education is growth under favorable conditions; the school is the place where those conditions should be regulated scientifically.” And an essential part of the program was to downgrade literacy by introducing the “look-say” method of teaching reading.

Dewey also wrote in 1898: “Change must come gradually. To force it unduly would compromise its final success by favoring a violent reaction.” In other words, he and his colleagues knew that the reforms they intended to make were not what the American people wanted. Thus, they had to be imposed so slowly, so incrementally, that the American people would not realize that they were being deliberately dumbed-down and led by their progressive educators into the slavery of socialism.

And their plan has succeeded beyond their wildest dreams. After 80 years of progressive indoctrination, America is on the brink of becoming a full-fledged socialist state, ready to discard all of the founding philosophical principles that made this nation the freest, richest, most powerful, and advanced nation in human history.

About half the American people have drunk the socialist Kool-Aid. The other half is trying to reverse the direction the progressive Democrats are taking us under their socialist leader who occupies the White House. That is why the coming presidential election in 2012 is so very important.

But even if the socialists win, Americans will still have the means to live as independent individuals: by educating their children at home and joining Christians who will not accept living under atheistic socialism. And if they remain politically active they will have to become conservative Republicans, a lot more conservative than Republican, for Republicans must bear a good deal of the blame for letting America reach this abysmal state.

But what is truly mind-boggling is that so many Americans have become socialists, despite the fact that socialism as a way of life has led to unspeakable cruelty and poverty wherever it’s been tried. All we have to do is look at Cuba to see proof of socialism’s failure. What all of this seems to confirm is that John Calvin was right about man’s innate depravity, and that when men depart from God they are capable of the worst evil they can dream up. And so it was National Socialism in Germany, Communism in Russia, and Shinto Emperor Worship in Japan that led to the most destructive, genocidal war in human history.

Godless, socialist America will not fare any better.



Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative,
non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



Subscribe

What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.